

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 14 PRESS ROUNDUP: PRESS ITEMS OF ARMS
CONTROL INTEREST

LONDON FOR AMB/EX
BERN FOR INDIAN OCEAN DELEGATION

1. HENRY TREWHITT OF BALTIMORE SUN SAID ADMINISTRATION
REPORTED "STEADY PROGRESS" IN ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS
WITH USSR DESPITE DOMESTIC CRITICISM AND COMPLAINTS TO
CONTRARY FROM MOSCOW. TREWHITT SAID KENNETH BROWN,
STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN, REFUSED TO SPECIFY ISSUES ON
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WHICH PROGRESS IS BEING MADE. U.S., BROWN TOLD NEWSMEN
AT FEBRUARY 13 PRESS BRIEFING, WOULD CONTINUE "LONGSTAND-
ING POLICY" OF SECRECY ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS FOR NEW SALT
AGREEMENT. TREWHITT SAID "ONE RESULT IS GREAT UNCERTAINTY
IN WASHINGTON'S ARMS CONTROL COMMUNITY ABOUT CURRENT STA-
TUS OF NEGOTIATIONS. AMONG SPECIALISTS NOT DIRECTLY
INVOLVED, VIEW IS GROWING THAT GREAT RANGE OF ISSUES, SOME

UNRELATED TO SALT, RULE OUT AGREEMENT FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE. FOR MOMENT SILENCE IS NOT SOVIET POLICY, PRAVDA, COMMUNIST PARTY NEWSPAPER, OPENED LATEST ROUND OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION SATURDAY WITH 5,000 WORD ARTICLE COMPLAINING ABOUT LACK OF PROGRESS."

TREWHITT SAID PRAVDA ARTICLE PREDICTABLY GENERATED DIFFERENT REACTIONS IN U.S. "SPECIALISTS SKEPTICAL OF EARLIER ADMINISTRATION TERMS FOR TREATY SUGGESTED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER ONLY NOW IS BECOMING BELATEDLY SENSITIVE TO SOVIET DUPLICITY. 'HE HAS SLOWED DOWN PROCESS,' ONE ARGUED, 'BECAUSE HE HAS LEARNED THAT RUSSIANS TREAT YOUR LAST CONCESSION AS NEW STARTING POINT WHILE ENGRAVING THEIRS IN STONE. NOW THEY'RE TRYING TO WRAP IT UP IN HURRY, BECAUSE THEY THINK THEY'VE GOT GOOD DEAL.'" TREWHITT SAID ADMINISTRATION SOURCES SUGGEST THAT PRAVDA ARTICLE IS INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR SOVIET DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, ESPECIALLY BY GENERALS WORRIED ABOUT CONCESSIONS TO U.S. TREWHITT QUOTED ONE SOURCE AS SAYING SOVIE LEADERS "WANT TO SHOW HOW TOUGH THEY'VE BEEN WITH AMERICANS WHEN REASONABLE TREATY IS IN WORKS." TREWHITT SAID VERY DEPTH OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THOSE INTERPRETATIONS MAY BE BAD OMEN FOR SALT, "FOR IT SUGGESTS EXPLOSIVE CONTROVERSY THAT WOULD GREET ANY AGREEMENT IN CONGRESS AT ANY TIME WHEN ADMINISTRATION APPEARS LESS THAN CERTAIN ON OTHER ISSUES." ALTHOUGH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS UNCLASSIFIED

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INSIST THAT ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS OUGHT TO BE TREATED ON THEIR OWN MERITS, APART FROM OTHER ISSUES, "THEY ALSO CONCEDE THAT SOVIET POWER PLAYS IN AFRICA, IN DEFIANCE OF U.S., AND DIFFERENCE OVER WIDE RANGE OF OTHER ISSUES LEAVE GENERAL CLIMATE FOR SALT UNFAVORABLE."

2. NEW YORK TIMES, IN REUTER DISPATCH FROM MOSCOW, REPORTED THAT USSR SAID IT WAS PREPARED TO PRODUCE ITS OWN NEUTRON BOMB IF WEST WENT AHEAD WITH ITS DEVELOPMENT OF WASHINGTON. TASS COMMENTARY SAID "IF NEUTRON WEAPONS ARE DEVELOPED IN WEST, SOVIET UNION WILL HAVE TO ACT WAY IT DID WHEN U.S. DEVELOPED FIRST ATOMIC BOMB."

3. WASHINGTON POST REPORTED THAT ITS REPORTER, WALTER PINCUS, WON GEORGE POLK REPORTING AWARD FOR STORIES ON PENTAGON PLANS TO DEVELOP NEUTRON WARHEAD. AWARDS NAMED FOR CBS CORRESPONDENT KILLED DURING 1948 GREEK CIVIL WAR.

4. U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT (FEB. 20) SAID SOVIETS ARE WORKING ON NEW TANKER PLANE THAT COULD REFUEL BACKFIRE BOMBER IN FLIGHT. THIS SPELLS TROUBLE FOR NEW SALT AGREE

MENT, MAGAZINE SAID, CONCLUDING "SALT TREATY WITHOUT LIMITS ON BACKFIRE FACES DIM FATE IN SENATE."

5. PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY, WHO WRITES BI-WEEKLY COLUMN ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS FOR NEW YORK NEWS WORLD, CHARGED THAT STATE DEPARTMENT "PLUNGED TO NEW DEPTHS OF DIPLOMATIC FAILURE" WHEN WORD LEAKED OUT THAT CARTER ADMINISTRATION WILL SETTLE FOR "LETTER" FROM BREZHNEV PROMISING NOT TO USE BACKFIRE BOMBERS AGAINST U.S. POINTING OUT SOVIETS "THUMBED THEIR NOSES AT US" WHEN ADMINISTRATION PLEADED WITH THEM TO MAKE SOME CONCESSIONS ABOUT BACKFIRE IN TWO NEGOTIATIONS, SCHLAFLY ASKED "WHEN WILL STATE DEPARTMENT LEARN THAT WHEN SOVIETS REFUSE TO BIND THEMSELVES TO AN AGREEMENT, THEY HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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STRATEGIC REASON FOR THAT REFUSAL?" SHE HAS BEEN NAMED TO WORLD ALMANAC'S ANNUAL LIST OF NATION'S 25 MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN.

6. RICHARD BURT, WRITING IN FEB. 13 NEW YORK TIMES, SAID ADMINISTRATION'S ARMS SALES POLICY IS "MIRE IN CONTROVERSY AND MANY OFFICIALS QUESTION WHETHER IT WILL SURVIVE BEYOND 1978." ONE CHIEF PROBLEM, OFFICIAL TOLD BURT, IS THAT PRESIDENT HAS FOUND IT NO EASIER THAN HIS PREDECESSORS TO DISENTANGLE MILITARY SALES FROM PRACTICE OF DIPLOMACY. IN SPITE OF PRESSURES, BURT NOTED, ADMINISTRATION HAS SUCCEEDED THIS YEAR IN IMPOSING, FOR FIRST TIME, CEILING ON ARMS EXPORTS TO COUNTRIES NOT ALLIED WITH U.S. "BUT THIS ACTION NOW POSES NEW QUESTIONS, PARTICULARLY HOW ADMINISTRATION WILL RESPOND TO MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR ARMS REQUESTS FROM ISRAEL, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA WHILE REMAINING UNDER ITS SELF-IMPOSED CEILING OF 8.6 BILLION DOLLARS FOR 1978." BURT QUOTED ONE OFFICIAL AS SAYING "IF WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE WORLD'S POLICEMAN, THEN NATIONS ABLE TO PURCHASE THEIR OWN POLICE FORCE ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO GO AHEAD AND DO SO." THIS BEING SO, OFFICIALS ARE NOW STRUGGLING WITH PROBLEM OF HOW TO FIT THESE MOUNTING ARMS REQUESTS UNDER ADMINISTRATION'S SALES LIMIT FOR 1978, BURT REPORTED. OVER HALF OF AUTHORIZED AMOUNT HAS BEEN TAKEN UP BY REQUESTS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN GRANTED, HE ADDED. VANCE

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